

Message Text

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SUBJ: WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS--MARCH 24-30, 1978

A. ATMOSPHERICS:

1. THE START OF PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN'S VISIT TO CHINA, BEGUN WITH A WARM WELCOME IN PEKING MARCH 29, AND THE VISIT TO BANGKOK OF LAOTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUNE SIPRASEUTH, WERE THE MAIN FOREIGN AFFAIRS FOCI OF THAI MEDIA THIS WEEK. BOTH VISITS TOOK PLACE AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF DOMESTIC LABOR UNREST, INCLUDING A GO-SLOW ON THE GOVERNMENT RAILROAD SYSTEM, A STRIKE BY TOBACCO MONOPLOY WORKERS, A THREATENED STRIKE BY PROVINCIAL WATERWORKERS EMPLOYEES AND THE HINT OF UPCOMING TROUBLE OVER MINIMUM PAY LEVELS.

2. KRIANGSAK'S CHINA TRIP WAS CALLED "MEANINGFUL" BY THAI RATH, THAILAND'S LARGEST-CIRCULATION NEWSPAPER, IN ITS MARCH 29 EDITORIAL. BUT THE DAILY WARNED THE THAI LEADER TO "BE CAREFUL IN MAKING ANY COMMITMENT WITH CHINA" AND BE SURE TO "ADHERE TO HIS PRINCIPAL POLICY" OF MAKING SOUTHEAST ASIA A ZONE OF PEACE AND NEUTRALITY.

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FOSTERING SINO-THAI TRADE IS ALSO IMPORTANT, THE EDIT SAID AND CONCLUDED, "WE EXPECT CHIAN TO APPRECIATE THE VITALITY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BASED ON EQUALITY."

3. THE SAME PAPER, IN A MARCH 27 EDIT, HAILED THE BANGKOK VISIT OF LAOTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUNE AS "A MILESTONE IN THE BUILDING OF PEACE IN THIS REGION" AND HOPED NO FURTHER DISPUTES BETWEEN

VIENTIANE AND BANGKOK WOULD ARISE IN THE FUTURE.

4. KRIANGSAK PERMITS PRO-PEKING PAPERS TO REOPEN: AS A GOOD-WILL GESTURE TO HIS CHINESE HOSTS, KRIANGSAK AUTHORIZED TWO OF THE SIX PRO-PEKING CHINESE-LANGUAGE BANGKOK NEWSPAPERS BANNED SINCE THE OCTOBER 1976 COUP TO REOPEN. THE DAILIES, CHUNG HUA JIT PAO-- FORMERLY SECOND-LARGEST CIRCULATION CHINESE PAPER--AND HSIN CHUNG YUAN--FORMERLY FOURTH-LARGEST CHINESE DAILY, HAVE REPEATEDLY, AND UNTIL NOW UNSUCCESSFULLY, APPLIED FOR PERMISSION TO REOPEN. THEIR PRESSES START ROLLING APRIL 4.

5. INTERNATIONAL NEWSMEN COVERING REFUGEE SITUATION: A MARKED INCREASE IN ATTENTION TO THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE SITUATION IN THAILAND BY AMERICAN NEWSMEN HAS RESULTED IN PREPARATION OF STORIES BY CORRESPONDENTS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES, LOS ANGELES TIMES, ASSOCIATED PRESS AND TIME MAGAZINE. ALL TRAVELED TO UPCOUNTRY REFUGEE CAMPS TO GATHER MATERIAL. THEIR OUTPUT SHOULD RESULT IN GREATER INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS OF THE REFUGEES' PLIGHT.

B. PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

1. R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER WAS GUEST OF THAI GOVERNMENT'S DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS AND ASSOCIATION OF SIAMESE ARCHITECTS FOR FOUR-DAY PERIOD LAST WEEK. USIS WAS ASKED TO ASSIST FULLER'S PUBLIC PROGRAM, AND PROVIDED NEWLY-ARRIVED PRINT OF "REFLECTIONS-R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER" TO PRECEDE REMARKABLE TALK BY THE 82 YEAR OLD INVENTOR/PHI-UNCLASSIFIED

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LOSOPHER AT MUSEUM OF SCIENCE. AUDIENCE OF SOME 200 PERSONS PAID RAPT ATTENTION TO BOTH FILM AND FULLER'S ONE-AND-A-HALF HOUR TOUR DE FORCE. USIS OFFICERS ALSO PRESENT AT PAIR OF SOCIAL FUNCTIONS DURING VISIT. SPECIAL KUDOS TO IMV WHICH RUSED BANGKOK DELIVERY OF FILM SO WE COULD SUPPORT PROGRAM.

2. VOLSPKR THOMAS DEGREGORI ADDRESSED FACULTY OF ECONOMICS OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY (ABOUT 20 PERSONS) AND DIVISION OF INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING AND MANAGEMENT AT ASIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (ABOUT 50 PERSONS) DURING TWO-DAY VISIT TO BANGKOK. SPEAKING ON GENERAL THEME OF "APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY," GEGREGORI PRESENTED WELL-REASONED ARGUMENT FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO PURSUE MOST MODERN TECHONOLOGY AVAILABLE, AND REJECT NOTION OF INTERMEDIATE OR APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY. LATTER, HE ASSERTED, COULD NEVER PROVIDE REQUIRED SCALE OF FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE NECESSARY TO FUEL DEVELOPMENT. AUDIENCES NOT COMPLETELY CONVINCED BY HIS ARGUMENTS, BUT IMPRESSED WITH HIS DIRECT APPROACH, AND WILL DISCUSSION OF ISSUES.

POST PARTICULARLY HAPPY TO CARRY PROGRAM TO AIT, AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE WITH GRADUATE STUDENTS FROM MORE THAN 18 COUNTRIES IN ASIAN AREA.

3. SHIP VISIT: THE POST WEDNESDAY ORGANIZED AND CONDUCTED A TOUR OF U.S. NAVY SHIP FOR 36 NEWSMEN FROM VIRTUALLY EVERY BANGKOK NEWSPAPERS AND TV STATION AS WELL AS RADIO THAILAND AND THE RTG INFORMATION OFFICE. THE SHIP, U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER KITTY HAWK, IS NOW VISITING THE THAI BEACH RESORT OF PATTAYA.

ALSO IN THE GROUP--THE LARGEST THE POST HAS EVER LED ON SUCH A TOUR--WERE CORRESPONDENTS FOR CBS AND ASIA WEEK, A REGIONAL WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE. ON MARCH 27, THE POST PROVIDED SOLE COVERAGE OF A HELICOPTER VISIT TO THE CARRIER, THEN STILL IN THE GULF OF SIAM, BY A GROUP OF HIGH-LEVEL THAI CIVILIAN AND MILITARY OFFICIALS.

POSITIVE MEDIA COVERAGE IS RESULTING FROM BOTH VISITS.
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